

Presentation to Senate Economic Development Committee
Legislators Tour – August 15, 2011
Location: Delray Neighborhood House

Note to Committee about these written comments: *This text is being provided for documentation purposes and is not exact verbatim: Speakers slightly modified their remarks orally.*

Scott Brines

Welcome to Delray. My name is Scott Brines. I am a Delray resident and president of the Southwest Detroit Community Benefits Coalition.

First I want to thank you all—Senator Kowall and your staff, your committee, other representatives here, and other guests. We can't thank you enough for taking the time to visit our community to understand our issues and the partnership we are seeking with you for any border development to be successful.

I also want to thank our community for being here to welcome you. I'm going to recognize some of you just so our legislators have an idea of who is in our coalition, and if you could please just stand briefly.

We have with us today Residents who live in the direct impact area who would be displaced by the new bridge -- like Cedric Jones and Reba and Joe Griffith, and others.

We have Residents who will continue to live in the community with the new development, like Manuel, Sharon and their children.

We have representatives of the many businesses and organizations who are part of our coalition---we've listed those here on this sign (refer to poster), and there are many others like these that I will name--

Kathy Wendler, Executive Director of Southwest Detroit Business Association
Julie Ebsch, owner of Delray Mechanical, a business that would be relocated
Jim Conway, of Historic Fort Wayne
Mary Serowoky, head health clinician at Southwestern High School
And Pastors Baker, Casillas, and Archer from three of our area churches.

We are all working together for an effective border development and for a healthy community.

For those that don't know, our coalition has the support of various foundations, including LISC, Ford Foundation, Kresge, and others. They are supporting a vision of sustainable infrastructure investments that work for host communities.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the hardest working State Representative, Rashida Tlaib, who has championed legislation with her colleagues, including Senator Young, in

order to see that any border development here is positive for the whole community with a Border Accountability Bills package. We are grateful for her partnership and leadership. Thank you, Representative Tlaib.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib

(written comments not available)

Debra Williams (slides accompanied remarks)

Thank you, Rashida. Again, my name is Debra Williams and I have been a lifelong resident of Delray for over 60-years. My family has operated a small convenience store in the neighborhood for 51 years and at age 84, my father is still there every day. We have many in our community who have spent their entire lives in Delray and this is home.

Our coalition of over 500 members includes residents, businesses, churches, community organizations, and others who support our vision of positive development. We have been working for over 3 years to ensure that *IF* a new bridge is built in our community, we would be assured that it will be positive for everyone. Our founding mission statement says:

We envision a community in which area residents and a new publicly-owned international border crossing will mutually coexist and benefit from each other.

Our community of Southwest Detroit is the most growing district in the city, with the influence of many immigrants who have located here and added many of our new small businesses along West Vernor, one of the city's longest commercial thoroughfares.

We have many successes and we have many challenges as well.

Southwest Detroit is also home to many industries and transportation infrastructure that serve Michigan and far beyond—and we bear the impacts of pollution on our quality of life and health.

We host the wastewater treatment plant that serves over a hundred communities in Southeast Michigan, we have the state's largest rail yard and only oil refinery, steel mills and many other heavy industries. And, of course, our border crossing with 10,000 diesel trucks coming through every day.

From a community truck survey, we counted over 700 semi trucks in 12 hours on one street with residences and a small market trying to stay in business.

We know that our zip codes have the worst pollution and health disease statistics in the state. Our children in Southwest Detroit are hospitalized for asthma at twice the rate as children across Michigan.

Many of our residents are elderly and have spent their entire lives here. Many are poor and don't have heat or a phone. Half of the community does not drive and we are isolated from services.

The possibility of another development coming has made it even harder as people have had to live with uncertainty about their futures, increasingly homes have been vacated. But more than 2000 people still live in Delray and will continue as families continue buying affordable homes here. *We must assure a quality of life for those who will sacrifice the most with another development.*

Not everyone has the opportunity to move out when we are faced with these developments. Many can't afford to leave on their own, so we have been forced to live with the pollution and decline in our property values and our quality of life.

Initially our community said "No" to another development that would bring more impacts. But we considered the opportunities that such development can attract. We said, if we are going to host another development, it must be done right and be a truly win-win project for everyone. *And we believe that it can be.*

Remedies for impacts are necessary, just like the cement and steel.

What we have asked you, our legislators, is to vote on this project as if it would be in your own community, with the same respect and care that you would want for your constituents, neighbors, and family.

We know that our border development is essential for Michigan's economic development. We need to ensure accountability and shared responsibility.

Both the Governor and Lieutenant Governor have toured our community. They have seen the challenges here and have called for a comprehensive development that will address impacts through community benefits.

Simone is going to give more information on the specific impacts and remedies.

Simone Sagovac (slides accompanied remarks)

Note: These remarks were abbreviated due to time.

I am going to describe just some of the project impacts and solutions we would like to see. What are the project impacts?

The New International Trade Crossing will include a 160-acre customs plaza. It will displace 257 families, 43 businesses with over 600 jobs, and 5 churches.

Homes will be stranded on the perimeter of the project—like on Campbell and Harrington Streets, and others will be completely isolated. These property values will

decline and the homes will most likely become unsellable. Without plans to address this issue, residents will have to file legal claims.

Truck traffic is projected to more than double in the NITC study. More trucks means more diesel pollution and our air quality will be made worse. We can't afford that. Too many of our children spend their lifetimes with asthma. One important fact to note is that adult hospitalizations for asthma in the zip code that includes the current bridge are 3-times the rate for the rest of Michigan.

Another impact is that four crossings over I-75 will be closed, further cutting off our community and threatening access to CHASS clinic that serves low-income and indigent patients, 65% of their patients have to cross I-75 to get the clinic. CHASS just broke ground for a \$17-million expansion and we need to assure effective access.

Our small businesses also need protections. We learned lessons from the Gateway project construction when businesses lost half of their customers and organizations had to close doors.

Green Sheets

As part of the final project study, known as the FEIS, there are some proposed mitigations or remedies, but they do not adequately address impacts.

The study admits to having an Environmental Justice impact on our community, but there are not guarantees that specific impacts will be remedied.

The study concluded that "Air quality will improve." But that is not true for the local community. Better circulation of traffic with two bridges may have regional improvements, but a customs plaza in our neighborhood with thousands of daily trucks will have many local impacts to air, health, and quality of life with noise, vibration, and trucks on neighborhood streets.

We need remedies beyond what is contained in the federally required Green Sheets to really address the issues.

(review slides of impacts and solutions)

We have already been working on solutions that can multiply the benefits of the border investment.

We are seeking replacement housing, and already have secured a \$1.9 million grant to partner with a local housing organization, Bridging Communities, to provide energy efficient homes for those who wish to stay in the area. It is a great concern that the elderly who have spent their whole lives in Delray will have this option. Many we know have not survived past dislocations from developments.

A home improvement program will help to address impacts and create healthier homes.

To offset the industrial land uses and replace parks that will be taken, we are looking for investment in new green spaces and connection to our riverfront. Children especially need this. We see Fort Wayne as a true gem that can be a broader tourist attraction and economic generator. Our growing Southwest Detroit deserves access to our riverfront.

We want to assure access to Jobs for local residents by providing appropriate training opportunities and a comprehensive outreach and partnership with our building trades and workforce development. And we want to help retain our small businesses and foster new ones in the area for access to services and more long-term jobs.

We want to see programs to reduce air quality impacts. We look to the successful implementation of clean trucks programs at the ports in California, where they set target reduction goals and have reduced emissions 80-90%.

To accomplish these achievable goals, we are seeking the opportunity to negotiate with the private bridge developer, like other successful developments around the country.

Scott Brines, closing remarks

Thank you to our speakers. We believe we can have a 21st century border crossing and do development thoughtfully. We believe it makes economic sense to have a place where business wants to do business--where any business will feel safe, welcomed, and will be a good neighbor to our community.

We have some time for your questions and comments.